

Skar

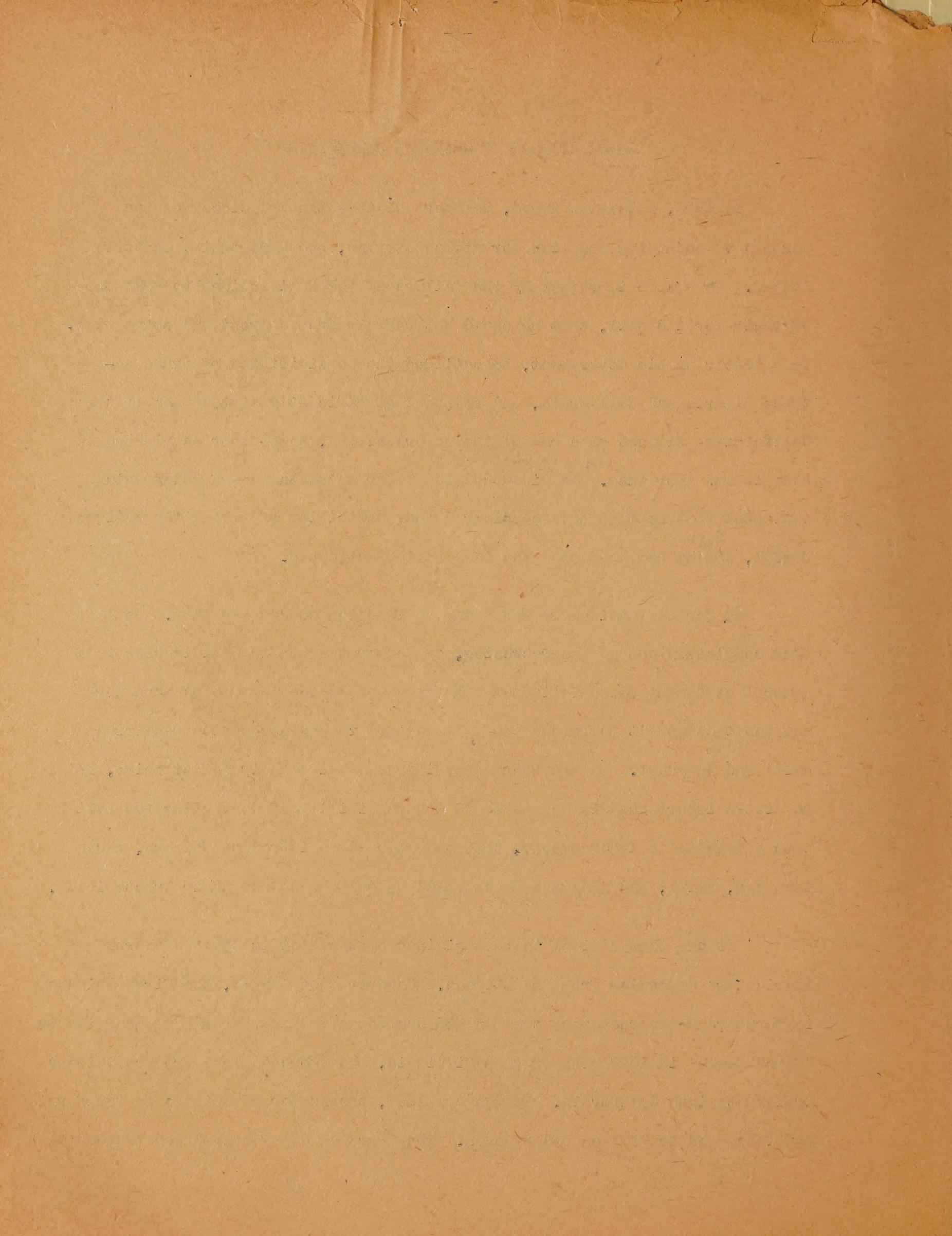
Chinese

LABOR HISTORY OF ORIENTAL COMPETITION

In 1806, a Russian named, Rezanov visited San Francisco for the purpose of obtaining supplies for his countrymen, who were taking pelts in Alaska. He was so impressed by the failure of the Californians to make use of their fertile soil, that he could not refrain from comment and suggestion. In a letter to his Government, he outlined the possibilities of trade between Siberia and California, and somewhat significantly hinted that if the Californians did not make use of the opportunities, some other people should step in and show them. ^{at first} He discussed the labor question in a fashion which indicated that he must have considered the possibility of making the Indians ^{later} useful, but he had abandoned the idea as impracticable.

As for the natives he was under no illusion concerning them. He left them completely out of the reckoning, by enumerating their deficiencies in a general statement which indicated them as a people too lazy to do hard work and too incompetent to be successfully engaged in any occupation requiring skill and judgment. He was thoroughly impressed with their deficiencies, and so little importance did he attach to the possibility of converting the Indians into a dependable labor supply, that he proposed to introduce Chinese, whose industry, skill, and judgment he extolled as only second to their tractability.

It has been claimed that aborigines of the Pacific Coast of North America are descended from the Chinese. However that may be, the first Chinese in Northern California were two men and one woman who came from Hong Kong in the "Black Eagle" in 1848 with Charles Gillispie, who proposed to introduce Chinese immigrants into California. By January 1850, the number of Chinese in California had increased to 787 men and 2 woman. They were gladly received and treated with



Skaan

consideration and on the occasion of the services on the death of President Taylor, held in San Francisco on August 29, 1850, the Chinese were invited to join and were given a prominent place in the procession; and again at the celebration in San Francisco upon the admission of California into the Union, a company of Chinese in rich native costumes, under their own marshal, and carrying a blue silk banner inscribed "The China Boys," formed a noticeable and attractive feature of the procession. In January 1852, Chinese in California had increased to 7,512 men and 8 woman but during that year the immigration became very large and there were added to the Chinese population in California 18,024 men and 14 women.

At the news of the gold discovery a steady immigration commenced which continued until 1876, at which time the Chinese in the United States numbered 151,000, of whom 116,000 were in the state of California. This increase in their numbers, rapid even in comparison with the general increase in population, was largely due to the fact that previous to the year of 1869 China was nearer to the shores of California than was the eastern portion of the United States. Another circumstance which contributed to the heavy influx of Chinese was the fact that the news of the gold discovery found southeastern China in a state of poverty and ruin caused by the Taiping rebellion. Masters of vessels made the most of this coincidence of favorable circumstances. They distributed in all the Chinese ports placards, maps, and pamphlets, with highly colored accounts of the golden hills of California. The fever spread among the Chinese as it did among other people, and the shipmen reaped a harvest from passage money.

Probably the most conspicuous characteristic of the Chinese is their passion for work. If he cannot secure work at a high wage a Chinaman will take it at a low wage, but he is a good bargainer for his labor and only needs the opportunity to ask for more pay, for he must work. This is true of the whole

Skaar

nation, from the lowest to the highest. They do not lack inventiveness and initiative but have also an enormous capacity for imitation. With proper instruction their industrial adaptability is very great. They learn what they are shown with almost incredible facility, and soon become adept.

If the social conditions prevailing in California in the days of '49 are recalled, it is not difficult to realize how welcome were the Chinese who first came to this country. Here were men who would do the drudgery of life at a reasonable wage when every other man had but one idea to work at the mines for gold. Here were cooks, laundrymen, and servants ready and willing. Just what every early Californians most wanted, these men could and would supply.

The result was that the Chinese was welcomed; he was considered indispensable. He was in demand as a laborer, as a carpenter, as a cook; the restaurants which he established were well patronized; his agricultural endeavors in draining and tilling the rich tule lands were praised.

Both Governor Burnett, the first civil Governor of California, and his successor, accepted the Chinese as desirable acquisitions; and Governor McDougal, in his annual message, spoke of them as "one of the most worthy classes of our newly adopted citizens," and recommended that further immigration should be encouraged, as they were particularly fitted to work on the reclamation of the fertile tule-swamps, overflowed by the rivers during the rainy season. The "Alta California," a San Francisco newspaper, went so far as to say, "The China Boys will yet vote at the same polls, study at the same schools, and bow at the same altar as our countrymen." Their cleanliness, unobtrusiveness, and industry were everywhere praised. When the Vigilance Committee of 1856 was organized, the Chinese merchants of San Francisco, already a powerful and concentrated colony, contributed generously

Shear

to its funds and received a vote of thanks.

The Chinese were surely in a land of milk and honey. They had left a land of war and starvation, where work could not be had and food must be begged, and here they found themselves in the midst of work and plenty. They were everywhere welcomed and their wages were such that they could save a substantial part to send back to the families they had left at home in China; or, if they did not wish to labor for masters, they could go to the mines. Here, they could take an old mine or claim which had been abandoned by the white miners and dig from it the gold dust which to them represented wealth untold. They were careful not to antagonize these whites by prospecting ahead of them, and in return they received the same treatment in the mining districts they had met with in San Francisco.

The Orientals were welcomed so long as the surface gold was plentiful enough to make rich all who came. But that happy situation was shortlived. Thousands of Americans came flocking in to the mines. Rich surfaces or surface claims soon became exhausted. These newcomers did not find it so easy as their predecessors had done to accumulate large fortunes in a few days. California did not fulfil the promise of the golden tales that had been told of her. These gold-seekers were disappointed. In the bitterness of their disappointment they turned upon the men of other races, primarily, the Chinese who were working side by side with them and accused them of stealing their wealth. They boldly asserted that California's gold belong to them. The cry of "California for the Americans" was raised and taken up on all sides.

Within a short time the Frenchman, the Mexican, and the Chileno had been driven out, and the full force of this antiforeign persecution fell upon the unfortunate Chinese. From the beginning, though well received, the

Scholar 2

Chinese had been a race apart. Their peculiar dress and queue marked them off from the rest of the population. Their camps at the mines were always apart from the main camps of white miners. This made it the easier to turn upon them this hatred of outsiders. With the great inrush of good-seekers, the abandoned claims which the Chinese had been working, again became desirable to the whites, and the Chinese were driven from them with small concern. Where "might made right" the peaceful Chinese had little chance.

The State Legislature was wholly in sympathy with the antiforeign movement, and as early as 1850 passed the so-called Foreign Miners' License Law. This imposed a tax of \$20.00 a month on all foreign miners. The words "all foreign miners" were just a blind primarily applied to the Chinese miners only. Instead of bringing into the state treasury the revenue promised by its framers, this law had the effect of depopulating some camps and of seriously injuring all of them. San Francisco became over-run with penniless foreigners and their care became a serious problem. The law was conceded to be a failure and was repealed the following year.

By this time this repeal was done, however, the Chinese had become the most conspicuous body of foreigners in the country, and therefore had to bear the brunt of the attacks upon the foreign element. Governor Bigler, who was anything but broadminded, suddenly became inspired with the realization of the value of an attack upon them (the Chinese laborers) as a political asset. He attributed all the vices of all the ages to the Chinese, and in his message, at least, left them not one rag of virtue to cover their implied corruption. He went so far as to discourage the keeping of contracts with the companies, and intimated that it would be an impertinence if the Chinese attempted retaliation; that conditions in California were peculiar, therefore she should enact specific and peculiar laws; having examined the constitutional question

S. K. S.

involved, he believed that the state had the right to prevent the entry of any class of persons that it "deemed dangerous" to the interests or welfare of its citizens. The result was a renewal of the Foreign Miners' tax, but in milder form than its predecessors. This did not satisfy the miners, who were at that time the strongest body in the community, and the next year the tax was again made prohibitive.

But it was not only the miners who hated the Chinese. The yield of the placers began to decline in 1853-1854, and the discovery of gold in Australia brought on a financial panic in the latter year. Prices, rents, and values fell rapidly and many business houses failed. There were strikes for higher wages among laborers and mechanics, though the prevalent rate for skilled laborers was \$10.00 a day and for unskilled laborers, \$3.50 a day. Investors became alarmed and withdrew their capital. Thousands of unsuccessful miners drifted back into San Francisco and began to look for work at their old time occupations. The labor market was glutted and an enormous number were out of work. To these unemployed men the presence of thousands of Chinese, thrifty, industrious, cheap, and above all, un-American, was obviously the cause of their plight. The cry was raised that the large number of Chinese in the country tended to injure the interests of the working classes and to degrade labor. It was claimed that they deprived white men of positions by taking lower wages, and that they sent their savings back to China; that they were human leeches sucking the very lifeblood of this country. Whoever came to their defense was immediately accused of having mercenary motives or of being half-witted.

The antagonism in San Francisco towards the Chinese grew slowly. In 1851 the immigration had reached about 2,700. In 1852 there were 18,400 additional Chinese in California, and the uneasiness had spread from the mines

and entered politics.

The celebrated phrase "The Chinese Must Go" is attributed to one Dennis Kearny, an Irishman, the "sand-lot agitator"; but Bigler, the third Governor of California, came out flatly with the sentiment in a special message to the State legislature, April 23, 1852. He gave expression to the growing belief that it was important to check Chinese immigration, particularly of coolies, who were sent out under contract to work at the mines, and would be returned to China after a fixed period by one or other of the Six Companies. These coolies, he advised the legislature, came to California influenced by covetousness only (here we find no mention by His Excellency of the motives influencing the stupendous white immigration of 1849-50, which included clergymen, school-teachers, lawyers, editors, and other exponents of the high occidental standard, who had deserted their avocations and stampeded for the mines); he went on to say that these coolie miners received from the companies a mere wage, that not one of them intended to settle in the country, that as their standards in all things were so low (the American has always despised frugality), compared to that of the United States, they were necessarily the most undesirable class of citizens which the country could adopt. He made no reference to the fact that in spite of the prejudice against the Chinese at the mines, it never had been found necessary to lynch one of them (Chinese), whereas every white race had been represented at the end of a rope up the gulch.

However, there is no logical argument that can make the least headway against race prejudice; and if the Chinese, who, we are all willing to grant, are vastly the superiors of the whites economically, would appreciate this fact once for all, much trouble and possibly bloodshed would be avoided.

Competition continued.

S.R. 2/2

It is the masses that rule in this country, not the enlightened few, who, whatever their breadth of mind, are always forced to yield to the popular outcry.

But although Bigler with this message encouraged the prejudice against the yellow race among the unruly members of the population, subjecting it to abuse and indignities, he was unable to obtain any legislation on the subject; and the answers of the Chinese merchants so far exceeded his message in logic and dignity that many Californians resented the position in which their Governor had placed them. On March 9, 1853, five members of the Committee on Mines and Mining Interests- James H. Gardner, T.T. Cabaniss, Benjamin B. Redding, R.G. Reading, and Patrick Canney- presented a report which indicated that among legislators, at least, there was a reaction in favor of an inoffensive race like the Chinese, who had played so important a part in developing the industries and resources of the State.

Their report asserted that there were twenty-two thousand Chinese in California, mostly from the Canton district. They had divided themselves into four departments, representing the district. Each department had a house in San Francisco presided over by two men who were elected by the department in the State. These departments are called "Wuey Gwoons" in Chinese. All coolies that came to the country were under the supervision of these houses, and were not allowed to leave the country until debts were settled. In sickness they were given care in hospitals in Chinatown, and in the same district all legal matters were attended to without reference to the California courts. The heads of these houses, men who stood high in the estimation of all reputable San Francisco business men and appeared before the Committee and stated that the original practice of bringing coolies to the country under contract to labor had been abandoned; most of them now came as their own masters and with

their own means; some had borrowed money and pledged their property; some had agreed to give the proceeds of their labor for a certain time; others had pledged their children to be owned as slaves in case of non-payment. They estimated the Chinese capital in the state, other than that employed in mining, at \$2,,000,000.

The "coolie" fiction of Governor Bigler was seized upon. In the first half of the nineteenth century a pseudo-slave trade had sprung up in transporting Chinese laborers under contract to work at a certain wage for a certain period to Cuba and parts of South America. Such laborers were ignorantly called "coolies" by those who were not familiar with the Chinese language. The word itself comes from two Chinese words, "koo" meaning to rent, and "lee" meaning muscle. The coolies are those who rent out their muscles, that is, unskilled laborers. In the four classes of China they rank with the third, being considered a higher class than the merchants but below the scholars and farmers. The word in no way signifies any sort of bondage. The "coolies" are perfectly free just as our own laborers are.

The Chinese who came to California were largely of this class and so described themselves on their arrival. It did not take long for the anti-Chinese agitators to define a "coolie" as a contract laborer and to describe how he was bound to a master in China to work a certain number of years at a small wage and how this terrible system was taking the very vitals out of American labor. This American labor about which there was so much concern was almost wholly composed of Irish and other European aliens, who were no more American than the Chinese. But they had a vote in prospect. The Chinese did not.

While the success of the coolie fiction was largely due to the fact that there were so many who wanted to believe it, a number of circumstances

S.R.A.C.

combined to give it greater vitality. Most of the business transactions of the Chinese were done through their benevolent organizations which came to be locally known as the "Six Companies". The Companies often contracted for large bodies of laborers and this fact led the unthinking to conclude that these laborers were under contract with the Six Companies to work for them as they should direct. This was not the true situation. These Companies simply acted as clearing-houses for all sorts of transactions among the Chinese, as they had found that they could handle things in a strange land more satisfactorily through such associations than they could individually.

CONTINUED

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Moy, Jin Mun, is one of the oldest Chinese in San Francisco, from whom much information and many facts were obtained on the History of Chinese Immigration, Labor, Organization, Business, and Social Condition in California from 1861 on. Mr. Moy was the first Chinese to be appointed as Chinese interpreter to the Court of Associate Justice Stephen Johnson Field. After that he was employed as Chinese interpreter in the U.S. Federal Court and California Supreme Court at San Francisco from 1883 to 1894.

- Bancroft, Hubert Howe: California- Popular Tribunal. San Francisco, 1887
- The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia, 1909. (Chinese and Japanese in America)
- Eaves, Lucille- A History of California Labor Legislation- Berkeley, California, August 23, 1910.
- Chen, Ta - Chinese Immigration in the United States. Washington, D.C. July 1923
- Hittell, Theodore A. - History of California (4 Vols.)
- Atherton, Gertrude- California. New York, 1935
- Ashury, Herbert- Barbary Coast, New York, 1933
- Coolidge, Mary Roberts- Chinese Labor Competition on the Pacific Coast. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences. Philadelphia. September 1909.
- Norton, Henry K.- The Story of California. Chicago, 1925.

There was much idle talk, and then the matter was dropped for a time, although Governor Bigler in his successive messages took occasion to scold the legislature for doing nothing to stop the Chinese immigration. Incidentally, the small boy, and sometimes his father, continued to stone the Chinese in the streets or pulled his queue when the mood was on him. Such nonsensical activities were carried out for no other reasons than harassing the yellow men, because other people were doing the same thing.

In spite of the short time, the Chinese ultimately, with much hardships, found their place in the California sun, and in time were recognized as, in the main, a sober, industrious, and picturesque element of the population. But this status was not reached for many years, and then only after the Chinese had survived innumerable campaigns of persecution even more systematic and cruel than those which had been directed against the Spanish-Americans. With the exception of occasional outbreaks, the abuse of the "greaser" was confined almost wholly to the gold-fields, while ill-treatments of the Chinese extended into the towns, villages, and Cities, or wherever there was Chinese present. In every place known in the State, for nearly fifty years, "John Chinaman" as the Chinese were and are nicknamed, was buffeted from pillar to post. He was everywhere discriminated against; he was robbed, beaten, and frequently murdered, and no punishment was meted out to his assailant; he was brutally, atrociously, and unceremoniously ejected from his or whatever mining or agricultural property he had managed to acquire; in the Court he was classed lower than the Negro or the Indian; such attitude of the interpretations of the California Courts was absolutely absurd and ridiculous. It was and is a well-established and known fact that the Chinese have a history of 5,000 years of civilization which was long before the civilization of the "barbarians" of the Americas or Europe. When the Chinese were wearing clothings, the inhabitants of the Continents were wearing animal skins or leaves for garments. Scores of

S. C. C.

laws were enacted for the sole purpose of preventing him in his efforts to earn an honest living. We may look into what the authors of the ANNALS of San Francisco put it in 1854:

"The manners and habits of the Chinese are very repugnant to Americans in California. Of different language, blood, religion, and character, inferior in most mental and bodily qualities, the Chinaman is looked upon by some as only a little superior to the negro, and by others as somewhat inferior....In short, there is a strong feeling- prejudice it may be- existing in California against all Chinaman, and they are nicknamed, cuffed about, and treated very uncere- moniously by every other class... It was only in 1851 and 1852 that their rapidly increasing numbers began to attract much attention. Considerable apprehension then began to be entertained of the supposed bad effect which their presence would have on the white population. Large bands of Chinese were working at the mines upon conditions which were supposed to be closely allied to a state of slavery. Much misunderstanding arose on the subject. It was believed that the gangs were receiving only subsistence and nominal wages- some four or five dollars a month for each man- and that speculators, both yellow and white, were setting them to work on various undertakings which free white laborers conceived should be executed only by themselves. If these vast inroads of Chinese were to continue, the white miner considered that he might as well leave the country at once, since he could not pretend to compete with the poverty-stricken, meek and cheap 'coolie', as so John Chinaman was now called by many. It was true that the latter never sought to interfere with the rich claims which the American miner wrought, while he submitted very patiently to be violently driven away from whatever neglected spot he might have occupied, but which the white man suddenly chose to fancy. It was true that the Chinaman regularly paid, as a foreigner- and was almost the very foreigner that did so- his mining license to the state; and was peaceable and hard-working subject. These things did not matter....Angry words, much strife, and perhaps some bloodshed, were generated in the mining regions, and the helpless Chinese were driven backwards and forwards and their lives made miserable."

The persecution of the Chinese in California acquired an official tinge in 1852, when Governor Bigler, at the behest of the white miners, sent message to the legislature in which he characterized the Chinese as "coolies" and urged the immediate passage of laws to restrict, if not entirely to prevent, their immigration. According to the Annals, "the terms of this message were considered offensive and uncalled for by most of the intelligent and liberal-minded Americans." After much bombastic oratory the Legislature declined to enact the statutes demanded by Bigler; but the continued influx of Chinese during the next twenty years, and several serious riots in Shasta and other mining towns, kept the question very much alive.

S.K.A. 11

Various local authorities passed legislation intended to harass the Chinese. Most of the Chinese were in San Francisco, so the principal efforts were made in that City. The famous "pigtail (as the queues were so insultingly called) ordinance" required all convicted male prisoners to have their hair cut within one inch of their heads. This particular piece of idiocy was vetoed by the Mayor after the famous case of Ho Ah Kow vs Noonan and the San Francisco Supervisors which was aired before the U.S. Circuit Court, in favor of the Chinese. Soon after the passage of this ordinance the police arrested one Ho Ah Kow for violating the sleeping-ordinance, and one Matthew Noonan, a keeper at the jail, immediately cut off his queue. Ho Ah Kow promptly brought suit against Noonan and the Supervisors for ten thousand dollars damages, alleging that the loss of his queue had exposed him to public contempt and ridicule and had irreparably injured him in the eyes of his countrymen. In 1879 the United States Circuit Court held that the queue ordinance was invalid, in that its provisions exceeded the powers of the Board of Supervisors. The claims of the victorious Ho Ah Kow were settled by the payment of a few hundred dollars (under pressure and threat if he expected more than what they (defendants in this case were willing to give), and the authorities molested no more queues, either in or out of prison. The Chinese kept their queues until the success of the revolt against the Manchu Dynasty, filled them with zeal for modernity and progress and impelled them to apply their own shears. Immediately after the vetoing of this ordinance, other similar vicious ones were enacted and passed.

Many of these vicious ordinances of San Francisco were declared unconstitutional, by the courts, but even the courts were not at all times consistent friends of the Chinese. The worst blow which they received was embodied in a decision given by the Chief Justice Hugh C. Murray who was a member of the famous Anti-Chinese Political Party, of the State Supreme Court. There was a statute on the books which prohibited "negroes and Indians" from testifying against a white man in the courts of the State. Justice Murray of the State

Skaia

Supreme Court, in the case of a George W. Hall, who had been convicted of murder on the testimony of a Chinese, held that the word, "Indian" as used in statutes concerning witness, included not only the North American Indians but the whole Mongolian race. He admitted that the word used in the Statutes was specific, but argued that from the time of the discovery of America by Columbus, all countries washed by the Chinese waters were dominated by the Indies and that all who came from thence were Indians. Such interpretation of the word, "Indian" by Justice Murray was absurd and ridiculous.

Another thing which strengthened the coolie fiction was the manner in which the Chinese were employed on the construction work of the Central Pacific Railroad. Because of the scarcity of labor the men in charge of this construction work had sent an agent to China to secure Chinese laborers. In order to get these men over to this country, it was necessary to advance their passage-money and other expenses. To cover this loan each Chinese so employed signed a promissory note for \$75. This note provided for monthly installment payments running over a period of seven months and was endorsed by friends in China. Each laborer was guaranteed a wage of \$35 a month. The financial arrangement was of course seized upon and made of by the Anti-Chinese agitators as the final proof of "Coolieism".

The belief that the Chinese were contract laborers was one of those unfortunate errors, which sometimes become current in our civic life, and by frequent repetition receive almost universal acceptance. In the present instance this phantom of Chinese slavery became so thoroughly a part of the political life of the Pacific Coast that no attempt was made to reach the truth of the matter. Every man in the public life was under so binding a necessity to accept the popular belief in regard to the Chinese and to truckle to it at every turn, that for one to seek the real truth of the matter was to end forthwith his political power or career.

Skar

In the years following 1854 this unthinking prejudiced, anti-Chinese movement ran riot. Various schemes were proposed to rid the country of the Chinese as if they were a pest. It was seriously suggested that they be all returned to China, but as this would have involved an expense of about seven million dollars and ten or a dozen ships for every vessel that was available, it was reluctantly laid aside. This scheme was failing, it was asserted that they could at least be driven from the mines. But as this would have deprived the State of a large revenue from licenses and would have crowded the outcasts in still greater numbers to the cities and agricultural districts, this too was abandoned.

When the actual construction of the railroad was finally commenced there soon developed a race such as had never been seen before. Tremendous powers struggled for the prized. The Union Pacific wanted to build its road as far west as possible and the Central Pacific was equally desirous to lay its rails as far to the eastward as possible before the two should meet. The strategy was obvious. The greater the mileage the greater the share in the freight rates. In each case some conditions favored and some greatly hampered the contestants. The Central Pacific had to have its machinery and supplies sent around Cape Horn but had cheap Chinese Labor. The Union Pacific must drag its materials overland or depend upon Missouri River boats. Both roads were being built through the new and uninhabited country, most of it desert where both food and water were scarce. Machine shops had to be established as the construction progressed. The Central Pacific had plenty of timber but its right of way required much clearing and grading. The Union Pacific had for the most part to traverse a flat country where little grading was required but had no timber on the ground.

The rivalry increased as the ends of the advancing lines approached each other. Thousands of Chinese were imported for the Central Pacific. Irish

Sherman

and European immigrants were rushed to the works on the Union. At one time about 25,000 men were engaged in the construction work. At the close of the war (Civil War) many soldiers joined the workers on the Union Pacific. This helped the builders to establish a sort of military discipline which made for greater efficiency. Many of the gangs could go through a full drill. This feature was especially appreciated in repelling Indian attacks. The construction work on the Central was in Charge of Crocker, who had his 10,000 Chinese almost as thoroughly trained. In the spring of 1869 when the rivalry had become intense, he established a world's record by laying ten miles of track in one day.

During the Civil War other issues overshadowed the Chinese question and the Orientals had a brief respite. But in 1868 the Burlingame treaty was entered into between the United States and China. It provided for reciprocal exemption from persecution on account of religious belief, the privilege of schools and colleges, and in fact it agreed that every Chinese citizen in the United States should have every privilege which was expected by the American citizen in China. Though naturalization was especially excepted, the provisions of this treaty aroused a storm of antagonism on the Pacific Coast. The labor agitators decried the treaty as a betrayal of the American workingman, and the whole Chinese question was up again in more violent form than ever before.

BIBLIOGRAPHY continued.

Low Kin- (Interview). I came to America when I was 19 years old at my father's expense. Upon arriving in America, I lived with my cousin in San Francisco, in 1873. I was employed in a Chinese laundry in 1876 or 1877, during the peak of the Anti-Chinese feelings. I was injured in the Kearny sand-lot brigade riot.

Ho Linn- (Interview). I came to America with my father when I was 12 years old. We lived in a railroad camp owned by the Central Pacific, while my father was working there. We went through many hardships, for we were not at all treated decently as we now are. We came to America at our own expenses, and certainly not on contract. We were not coolies as Governor Bigler called us. We were

skar

free laborers, like all Chinese laborers.

History of California- Gertrude Atherton, New York, 1935
Story of California- Henry K. Norton- Chicago, 1925
Barbary Coast- Asbury, Herbert- New York, 1933
Exempted Classes of Chinese Immigration- Dr. Ng Poon Chew-
San Francisco, 1908.

Various Governor who followed Governor Bigler repeated his recommendations (restriction of Chinese immigration), but an element of hypocrisy was easily discernible in the attitude of many of them, especially Leland Stanford, the founder of Stanford University, who was Governor of California from 1861 to 1863. In his message to the Legislature in January 1862, Stanford declared that Chinese immigration should be discouraged by every legitimate means. He also expressed the opinion "that the presence of numbers of that degraded and distinct people would exercise a deleterious effect upon the superior race." Throughout the State Governor Stanford was acclaimed for his forthright utterances upon the most important issue of the periods. However, enthusiasm for him decreased when it was disclosed that while he was so boldly expressing his solicitude for the welfare of the white race, the corporation of which he was president was importing thousands of Chinese laborers to build the Central Pacific Railroad. As the sayings go, Stanford did not practice what he preached. He publicly remained violently anti-Chinese, but privately he continued to employ them. The truth of it was that he was never really an anti-Chinese agitator at heart. His "expressed opinion" was only served as his political asset. His personal sentiment was very friendly towards the Chinese. Stanford was very broad-minded. As late as 1888, his estate which was divided into 500-acre tracts employed Chinese laborers to do most of its work.

A few months after Stanford retired as Governor, in 1863, the Legislature passed a law prohibiting the giving of testimony by Chinese in any legal action in which a white man was involved, and repealed a statute, passed in 1850, which had thus discriminated against only Negroes, mulattoes,

and Indians.

The Chinese competition in labor in California is ordinarily assumed that whenever a Chinese enters any occupation he necessarily takes the place of an American or a European foreigner. But this does not at all correctly represent the true labor situation since the arrival of the first Chinese immigrants in California in 1849. The State of California which contained three-fourths of the Chinese immigrants until after the exclusion law was passed, was settled by men drawn by the lure of gold, by adventurers, and speculators of every class and nationality- industrial gamblers, in fact- who had no intention of earning a living there as laborers or domestics. They came to make no less than a fortune; and if they were driven to common tasks temporarily when their luck failed in mining or in the scarcely less risky business of provisioning camps and importing merchandise, they resented it and constituted, therefore, an exceptionally discontented and unstable laboring class. For nearly two decades the stratum of society, which in any settled community is filled by those who cook, clean, wash, and sew by those who performed the heavy, drudging labor important to industrial development, but was entirely lacking. There was almost no women or youth who would work even at excessively high wages, and until the Kearney Period in 1876 or 1877 no supply of common laborers. At times, the gaps were partially filled by those newly-arrived or down on their luck, but all of them would desert at the news of a new gold-strike or at the chance of any sort of promising speculation.

The Chinese laborers, therefore, coming almost exclusively from the free agricultural peasantry of Kwang Tung (Canton) and Fukien provinces, were welcome, and being more enticed by the tales of high wages than by the golden adventures, fitted naturally into the labor gaps left by men of more adventurous disposition. They (Chinese laborers) became- what they will remain for the most part- - gap-filers- taking it for granted the menial, petty and laborious work which white

men would not do and for which their experience and their native characteristics especially prepared for them.

The question has, furthermore, generally been discussed with reference to conditions existing in a few towns, and the one large city San Francisco; yet during the thirty years of free immigration, a majority of the Chinese were in the rural and mountain districts engaged in domestic, agricultural, and general labor and in placer mining. In these sparsely populated and often very remoted districts their services were acknowledged to be indispensable and only partly filled a demand which has never been supplied by native or foreigners (European workers). Even in placer mining they worked chiefly the poor and abandoned claims which white men left untouched and rarely attempted to compete for the higher prizes of fortune.

As previously mentioned, during the first twenty years of California history there were, indeed, occasional anti-Chinese movements coincident with political campaigns, when candidates and agitators catered to the mining votes by appeals to a natural race antipathy which had been intensified by the reconstruction measures after the Civil War. The objection to the Chinese in the earlier time was a phase of the initial struggle of the Americans against all foreigners for the control of the mines; and somewhat later took the form of a general apprehension of "an invasion of heathen hordes" rather than complaint of the competition of Oriental labor. Without repeating in detail the proofs, it may be stated finally that at this period the Chinese were a considerable and indispensable element in California progress and in no proper sense competitors of white labor. Even Mr. Samuel Gompers has granted that up to 1869 the presence of the Chinese "caused no serious alarm or discomfort to white labor."

But within the decade following the opening of the Central Pacific Railroad the industrial conditions of the Far West were rapidly altered. The



The builders of the Southern Pacific, after employing every available white laborer at good wages, had been compelled to prepay the passages of thousands of Chinese Immigrants in order to finish the road within the time required by Congress; and upon its completion ten thousand whites and Chinese were discharged upon the western labor market. Shortly afterward the greater ease of travel, the phenomenal mining stock sales and two successive years of abundant rainfall upon which mining and agricultural prosperity depended, greatly stimulated immigrants from the eastern States. In 1868 and 1869 there came into the State of California about 50,000 white immigrants - a number more than double the net increase of the ten years previous. The railroad, instead of bringing in a general era of prosperity, as had been anticipated, opened California markets to eastern competition and at once reduced profits on local manufacturers and commodities, while immigration precipitated the inevitable fall of wages, which had remained extraordinarily high as a consequence of isolation and the conditions of pioneer mining. Before western community had become readjusted to these disconcerting results of closer union with the world the panic of 1873 struck the eastern states and settled into a prolonged depression. The financial status of California, being established on a gold basis and chiefly supported by the mines, was not at first adversely or directly affected; but indirectly California began to share the disaster through the thousands of unemployed who had come from the dullness of eastern cities to the land where gold and work were said to be still abundant.

Unfortunately, the white immigrants were of a class of which the state already had an over-supply:- factory workers, clerks, semiskilled artisans, and men of low-grade city occupations. The records of California Labor Exchange, which handled the greater part of the unemployed in San Francisco from 1868 to 1870, show that even in those thriving years there was an excessive supply of

waiters, painters, dishwashers, grooms, porters, bookkeepers, salesmen, warehousemen, and indoor workmen of all kinds, while there was an unfilled demand for heavy labor on construction works and farms, for lumbermen and machine blacksmiths, and for women and boys as cooks and helpers. Fifty percent of the applicants were Irish, ten percent English, and Scotch, ten percent German, and only nineteen percent native American. Of whom a considerable number must have been of Irish or German descent. The labor markets continued to be supplied from men of no use in the country and most of whom would not go there even at wages much above those to which they had been accustomed.

In spite of the exaggerated conditions just mentioned, Governor Haight, in his message of December 1869, alluded to Chinese Immigration in the choicest English incorporated in our democratic vocabulary: "The Chinese", said he, "are a stream of filth and prostitution (here, he exaggerated the conditions to the extreme and ridiculously) pouring in from Asia, whose servile competition tends to cheapen and degrade labor". He also declared Chinese testimony to be utterly unreliable, but in the breath (he always contradict his own words, unawaringly) announced himself in favor of "removal of all barriers to the testimony of any race or any class as a measure not simply of justice but sound policy".

Governor Booth's remarks, which might have been written yesterday, are worth quoting:

It may be true that the interests of capital and labor are the same (said he); but in practice each is prompted by self-defense or self-interest, and avails himself of the other necessities; and any system that introduces a class of laborers whose wages are exceptionally low gives capital and advantage; and in so far as it has a tendency to establish a fixed line of demarcation between capital and labor and create a laboring caste, it is a social and political evil. But, however this may be and whatever the course of action the

Shad.

federal government, which has exclusive control of the subject of Asiatic immigration, may take in relation to it, there is but one thing to do in reference to the Chinese, and that is to afford them full and perfect protection. Mob violence is the most dangerous form by which the law can be violated, not merely in the immediate outrage committed, but in the results which often follow; communities debauched, jurors intimidated, and courts controlled by the political influence of the number that are guilty.

Romualdo Pacheco, who as lieutenant-governor administered for ten months after Booth resigned to take his place in the United States Senate, seems to have had no time to devote to the question; but Governor Irwin opposed Chinese immigration in 1875. By this time, however, the opinion of a governor on this vital subject counted for little save as it affected his chances of election. It was become the especial prerogative of the mob agitators.

Periodically labor is disgraced and crippled by agitators, whose only ambition is a Utopian condition in which they can, after looting, loaf for the rest of their lives, and whose shibboleth is the brotherhood of man. The mass of laborers, unionist or otherwise, go about their business, protect themselves by well-thought-out methods, and possess brains enough to realize that all changes must develop slowly; if radically, the result will be mob rule and, its inevitable sequence, a dictator. And a reversion to first principles after the destruction of all that steady progress has achieved. But, as in every other class, there are thousands without brains, and these are easily controlled when conditions have arisen that present a striking opportunity to those of their number that live without work.

In the '70's, when everybody was excited and enormous fortunes were being made in the Virginia City mines—many on paper, as the events proved, for few were cautious enough to sell before it was too late—agitators in San



Skaar

Francisco began holding meetings in empty sandlots on for the rich to disgorge in favor of his superior in all the virtue, the day-laborer; that no man should be permitted to own more than a few acres of land. But this was a mere preliminary struggle. They were quite willing to appropriate all the capital in the state; but as that drastic measure presented difficulties they concentrated on the unfortunate Mongolian. This was the easiest way of currying favor with masses during that era, it was the war-cry of the politicians after votes, and the stock in trade of the agitators. And as has been pointed out, the temperature of the '70's was high. Everyone was excited about something at all time, or if he enjoyed a brief respite he feared that he was worn out.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

From the personal recollection and papers of Dr. Jin Fuey Moy who was the first Chinese to receive a Doctor of Medicine degree in the United States in the '80's. He was also the first Chinese to be appointed by President McKinley in 1898 as Chinese secret agent for the U.S. Treasury.

From the personal diary of Charles Moy who was also a Federal Agent during the McKinley Administration. He was connected with the Dept. of Labor for the carrying out of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Chinese and Japanese in America. Annals of Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia. September 1909.

History of California- Hittell, Theodore. San Francisco, 1897

History of California- Gertrude Atherton, Chicago, 1935

Mee Hee- (Interview). I came to San Francisco in 1879, when I was about 17 years old. I made the trip with a paternal uncle. We did not come to America for the purpose of making any fortunes. We came because of the high wages paid at the time. The kinds of work which we did in those days were not wanted by the white laborers. What they really wanted was those yellow dust found beneath the soil.

Wong Chue Jark- (Interview). My father and I came to San Francisco in 1879. I was 13 years old at the time. Some relatives of ours wrote us about the discovery of gold in California and they could be had by simply dig for it, but we were also told that there were anti-Chinese movements and campaigns

BIBLIOGRAPHY continued.

Shan

against the Chinese laborers. We came over to America in spite of the movements against the Chinese. My father was employed in the farm near San Francisco. Later, he entered domestic service. When I was old enough I worked in a railroad camp as a laborer on railroad ties, and my father was a cook in the camp. All the talks about Chinese being "coolies" or bonded slaves were just exaggerated by those who had political ambitions.

Norton, H. K. - Story of California. Chicago, 1925.

SH 23
Series II

PAUL RATHS PAPERS / SURVEYS — CHINA

Lia
China

31

